



THE COMMUNICATOR

Editors: Jocelyn Goodney, Administrative Assistant I
Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

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Grant County Employee Newsletter

In this issue...

*2021 Budget
Dana's Desktop
Working from Home
Employee Counseling Services*

*Change in Status
Service Anniversaries
Retirement Recognition
Welcome to our Team
Word Find*

2021 Budget

A Work In Progress.....

As shown in the picture, Department Heads are working laboriously on balancing the budget for 2021. This year has been more challenging than past years due to a known \$900,000 deficit left over from last year where the county filled the gap using carryover and general funds. Add in an 8% health insurance increase, a hefty workers compensation increase, the wage increase and improvement wish lists, the departments started with approximately \$2.4 M deficit on day one of the budget workshop.



September 2020 Grant County Budget Workshop

At the beginning of the second workshop day, the deficit was down to \$1.9 M deficit. The departments dug in and continued working to reduce. By the end of a full afternoon of discussion the group had brought the deficit down to around \$135,760. That included more cuts in budgets, using funds lapsed from 2020 budget and sales tax carryover, and possibly using ideas such as eliminating the HRA carryovers, increasing the Single health insurance premium employee contribution from 5% to 15%, and reducing mileage rate from IRS rate to State rate.

The budget isn't balanced yet, however. We continue to work with the hope that through additional savings found in department's budgets, adjustments can be made without reducing some county benefits. The County Board of Supervisors reviews the budget at their October meeting and from there, it will likely be kicked back to the Executive Committee for final review and recommendation to the board to act on at the November county board meeting.

Working LEANER...

Budgets are getting more challenging to balance every year. Levy limits are capped, so increasing property taxes isn't an option unless drastic measures like a referendum takes place. Another option left is to rework the county structure. Beginning early this winter, the county will be reviewing all programs and benefits for efficiencies. Working across department lines, sharing staff and resources, creating a Capital Improvement Plan, and other continual improvement ideas need to be discussed and worked through to allow for the county to budget within their current fiscal environment. This will require leaner and more efficient processes. A few suggestions to be reviewed are non-mandated programs, efficiencies in mandated programs, staffing levels, competency and productivity, and centralization (Finance, Maintenance, etc.).

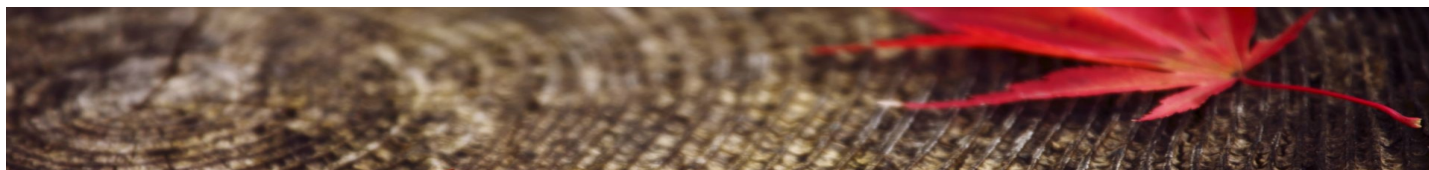
Not All Bad...

COVID-19 has created many challenges in 2020, BUT funding for COVID-19 related expenses will result in reimbursement of extra dollars spent on non-budgeted items needed to manage the immediate changes of workplace and work practices. for example; personal protective equipment and additional staffing to meet the increased workload due to the Coronavirus. The Board has also approved out-of-budget spending for numerous projects to take place this fall, such as, improved technology to allow for employees to work from home, improved fiber distribution, additional VOIP phones including the system at Orchard Manor, and improved technology as we continue to utilize Zoom to avoid those costs in the future.

I appreciate dedicated efforts of Department Heads and elected officials working together with all county staff as we continue to work through today's challenges and into the future.



Submitted by Grant
County Board Chair,
Robert Keeney



Dana's Desktop

Dana C. Andrews, Grant County IT Technician



THE FIFTH ELEMENT... (NOT LEELOO)

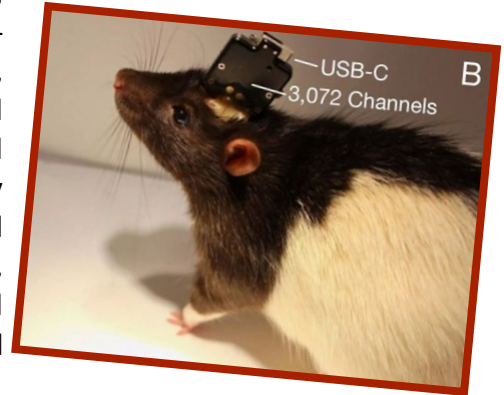
High school science taught us that there are four types of matter: solid, liquid, gas, and plasma. But a new theoretical study now says that the fifth form of matter has been lurking right under our noses and has the potential to cause a worldwide crisis if left unabated. This proposed fifth form is information.

Dr. Melvin Vopson, a senior lecturer in physics at the University of Portsmouth, has taken a thermodynamics principle proposed by physicist Rolf Landauer in 1961 and used it to explain the relationship between bits — the tiniest parts of information that make-up everything from how we send texts to how quantum computers are coded — and energy.

In a nutshell, Landauer proposed that destroying a bit of information requires a comparable dissipation of energy. Professor Vopson, with this principle in mind, believes it stands to reason that the creation and destruction of more and more bits of information would require the use of more and more energy. And this is precisely the problem, says Vopson.

"The growth of digital information seems truly unstoppable," Vopson explains. "According to IBM and other big data research sources, 90 percent of the world's data today has been created in the last 10 years alone. In some ways, the current COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this process as more digital content is used and produced than ever before. Vopson continues, "According to IBM, we collectively create 2.5 billion gigabytes of information every day on Earth, and because each byte is comprised of

eight bits, this is equivalent to 2×10^{19} bits. For a whole year, this is equivalent to 7.3 sextillion bits." That is a lot of information. With estimated growth rates per year of 5 to 50 percent, Vopson estimates that the total number of bits created could match the total number of atoms on Earth as soon as 2170. And in slightly less time, just 130 years, Vopson estimates that energy requirements for information alone will be equivalent to total power consumption on Earth today, which includes industrial, transportation, and domestic energy. Vopson has also speculated about this much energy might actually create matter ($E=MC^2$) and if so, what will be the ramifications.



THE COMING OF CYBORGS

Neuralink, Elon Musk's startup that's trying to directly link brains and computers, has developed a system to feed thousands of electrical probes into a brain and hopes to start testing the technology on humans in the not-to-distant future. Chief Executive Elon Musk revealed Tuesday that its already working in animal tests.

Neuralink's initial goal is to help people deal with brain and spinal cord injuries or congenital defects, Musk said. The technology could help paraplegics who have lost the ability to move or sense because of spinal cord injury. But the long-term goal is to build a "digital super intelligence layer" to link humans with artificial intelligence.

"Ultimately, we can do a full brain-machine interfaces where we can achieve a sort of symbiosis with AI," Musk said. One goal along the way will be letting people type 40 words per minute just by thinking.

The startup uses sewing machine-like technology to drill small holes into brains and insert super-slender electrodes called threads, steering clear of blood vessels as they go. In one case, it laced electrodes into a rat's brain and fitted it with a USB-C port so the sensor data could be monitored. In an advanced version, the wires will connect to a pod that fits behind the ear and then uses bluetooth to communicate with your phone. Make sure you have an unlimited plan!

IN THE 20'S

When I write about something in the twenties, I bet you think of flappers and gangsters. Alas, no. In this case I am talking about the decade starting with 2020. In particular, the technology we can expect to see in the next 10 years or so.

First up, obviously; we will see a lot of apps and gadgets aimed at health. From contact tracing devices to wearables that monitor your vitals. There has been a push since 2000 to connect various medical information into a universal data system but now, with the growing availability of Artificial Intelligence, broadband everywhere (not quite yet, but SpaceX is almost there), and massive cloud services that can scale on demand, the goal of better medicine and level of care is becoming much closer. Personally, I am waiting for the watch that slaps my wrist when I reach for the refrigerator.

Another expected development is in line with the earlier story about Elon Musk and Neuralink. Paralyzed patients lucky enough to be enrolled in clinical trials are already walking again thanks to rapidly advancing neurotechnology. In 2018, Swiss and UK scientists announced they had placed nerve signal-boosting implants into the spines of three men paralyzed in road and sporting accidents. All are now

able to walk a short distance. And just last year researchers at the Grenoble University Hospital in France used an exoskeleton to give a 28-year-old man back the use of his lower limbs after falling and breaking his neck. The man uses two 64-electrode brain implants to control the robo-suit.

Speaking of artificial intelligence, everyday mental health is being examined as a service. Recent announcements have included an app that can read your face to determine your mood. The facial tracking is accomplished through a technique known as the constrained local model, or CLM, a type of algorithm that draws on thousands of existing pictures of faces to identify facial features and predict how they'll look when the face is scrunched into a smile, for example, or drooping in a frown. In tests reported in the IEEE Transactions magazine on 'Affective Computing', the software proved to be better than humans at telling joyful smiles from frustrated smiles. MIT is working on something similar but their long term goal is to be able to determine the mood of crowds. I suspect this is more about shopping than protests but who knows...

And finally, there are two other avenues of research going on that complement each other. The first is creating super-realistic virtual humans that you cannot tell from the real thing for use in movies and TV shows. Speculating in some of the "trade" magazines is future movie and TV stars will not physically exist in our reality. There are also university projects that are doing the same thing with music (computer developed music that will hit the top 10).

The counter-balance to all of this is new technology being developed and tested that identifies deep fakes. Deepfake videos are where artificial intelligence is used to swap one person's image in a photo or video, for another's. Deeptrace, a company set up to combat this, says in just the eight months between April and December 2019, deepfakes rocketed by 70 per cent to 17,000. In its 2019 report, *The State of Deepfakes*, Deeptrace says the top four dedicated deepfake sites generated over 134 million views.



Working From Home

Submitted by Joyce Roling, Personnel Director

Working from Home Has its Challenges:

Who would have thought telecommuting would still be an option 6 months after COVID-19 started? Social distancing, mask wearing, and personal safety are all very important for keeping employees healthy during their work day.

While some employees returned to their place of work, others continue to work from home for various reasons.

In an effort to ensure productivity from home supervisors need to be most vigilant in continued contact with staff. Although software has the ability to track work being done (or not done) electronically, supervisor contact is essential to maintaining a workflow throughout the day as well as making sure your staff are doing okay emotionally. Oftentimes, those working from home are

isolated from others all day long. The day to day contact with co-workers is missing. A sense of loneliness is not uncommon. A few things that may help are:

- ✓Have a defined workplace
- ✓Have set work hours
- ✓Dress for work
- ✓Take scheduled breaks
- ✓Get up and walk around
- ✓Touch base with co-workers and supervisor electronically via Zoom meetings or telephone (TALK)



The following is a link with more information.

<https://techacute.com/6-tips-mental-health-working-from-home/>



Employee Counseling Services

Submitted by Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

One of the responsibilities of your immediate supervisor is to advise employees regarding job related matters. Therefore, employees should feel free to seek the counsel of their supervisor on job related matters. Also, while there is not a specific employee counselor position in the Personnel Office, the Personnel Director is available for career counseling.

Because people may encounter problems with which they cannot cope and which have an adverse effect on their lives and job performance, Grant County encourages professional counseling to help employees and their immediate family members overcome such difficulties. These problems can be of an emotional, financial, legal, health, alcohol, or other drug related nature as well as any other area which causes significant difficulties. Your supervisor can refer you to professional counseling services. Professional counseling services may be covered by your health insurance plan.

County employees may also be eligible to receive services through an Employee Assistance Program provided by National Insurance Services. Below is a snippet of the brochure and I have recorded a video about the benefit that you may watch at this link <http://phptube.co.grant.wi.gov/video/9/employee-assistance-program-created-on-2020-09-18-> (3 minutes).

The EAP Program

Everyday life can be stressful and can affect your health, well-being and performance. Fortunately, our Employee Assistance Program can aid in finding solutions. When facing personal problems, you might struggle with where to turn for help. The first step is usually the hardest, and guidance is often the key. That's why National Insurance Services (NIS) offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). An EAP offers a confidential place to find the answers that work for you.

Your EAP Service Provider

Morneau Shepell is a leader in the field of Employee Assistance and has been providing employee assistance services for over 20 years. Morneau Shepell has the experience to provide the broad range of services and guidance that is paramount to an EAP - whether it's help with day-to-day concerns or guidance through a challenging crisis. The information you discuss through the EAP is kept confidential in accordance with federal and state laws.

The EAP Process

When you access the EAP, Morneau Shepell counselors listen and take action toward finding solutions. The next step may include meeting with a mental health counselor for up to three face-to-face visits, negotiating health insurance

benefits or referrals to community resources for legal and financial services.

Referrals and Resources

You can receive information and a listing of childcare and eldercare resources with confirmed vacancies meeting your specifications. If face-to-face mental health counseling sessions are required, Morneau Shepell counselors will refer you for counseling at a location that is convenient to your home or work. Morneau Shepell counselors can also refer you to self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous and community financial and legal resources for debt management.

Claimant Assist

NIS's Claimant Assist program offers special services to Long-Term Disability claimants or Life insurance beneficiaries at no charge. If you have Disability insurance coverage through NIS, our Long-Term Disability Claimant Services are available to guide and counsel claimants and their immediate family members. If you have Life insurance coverage through NIS, our Beneficiary Services Program provides counseling and assistance to beneficiaries when faced with the challenge of coping with loss.

EAP services are available to you two ways:
Phone: 865.451.5465
Online: www.niseap.com

Claimant Assist services are available:
866.472.2734

Change In Status:

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly **notify** his/her supervisor and the **Grant County Personnel Department** of any changes in personal data **no later than seven business days after the change occurs.** Personal mailing addresses, **marital status**, telephone number, number and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in event of an emergency, educational accomplishment, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times with the employee's personnel file.

Failing to notify the Personnel Department may impact your insurance and receipt of important notices.

Anyone wishing to have a specific subject discussed in a future newsletter may contact Joyce Roling at 723-2045 or jroling@co.grant.wi.gov.

Service Anniversaries

October, 2020 through December, 2020 (5 year increments)

Mary Bailie (Orchard Manor), 30 years on October 11
Linda Gebhard (County Clerk), 30 years on November 8
Kathleen Schramm (Child Support), 30 years on December 19

Christopher Johll (Sheriff), 25 years on December 4
Kristin Schier (Register in Probate's Office), 25 years on December 11
Jamie Kreul (Health), 25 years on December 22

Chris Eng-Reuter (Orchard Manor), 20 years on October 30

Joslynn Trumm (Orchard Manor), 10 years on October 24
Shawn Handfelt (Health), 10 years on October 25
Kenneth McAndrew (Veterans Service Office), 10 years on December 1

Krystle Lorenz (Social Services), 5 years on October 12
Kris Mumm (Orchard Manor), 5 years on October 22
Donita Evans (Orchard Manor), 5 years on October 29
Bethany Hammel (Sheriff), 5 years on November 9
Alyssa Simpson (Orchard Manor), 5 years on December 2
Casey Gradel (Health), 5 years on December 4
Lindsay Taber (ADRC), 5 years on December 7
Britnee Bottomley (Orchard Manor), 5 years on December 30

Retirement Recognition

June 21, 2020 through September 12, 2020

Laura Reynolds (Orchard Manor), 33 years (retired July 6)

Cindy Kratcha (ADRC), 18 years (retired September 1)

Grant County wishes you a happy and healthy retirement!

Reminder: Please contact the County Personnel Office at least two months before your retirement date so we can assist you with the process.

Welcome to our Team!

New Employees - June 21, 2020 through September 12, 2020

Heather Jones ~ June 23 ~ Orchard Manor

Erin Walker ~ June 25 ~ Orchard Manor

Madelyn White ~ June 25 ~ ADRC

Melody Bahr ~ June 30 ~ Health

JoAnn Wiederholt ~ July 2 ~ Health

Andrew Nicholas ~ July 8 ~ Emergency Management

Jennifer Schmitz ~ July 20 ~ Emergency Management

Emma Merz ~ July 24 ~ Orchard Manor

Kurt Hoeper ~ July 29 ~ Emergency Management

Jacob Oechsle ~ August 10 ~ Highway

Haylie Birchman ~ August 14 ~ Orchard Manor

Kylie Larson-Blodgett ~ August 14 ~ Orchard Manor

Alex Russell ~ August 17 ~ Sheriff

Ryan Koeller ~ August 24 ~ Highway

Samantha Mullikin ~ August 25 ~ Orchard Manor

Allison Mann ~ August 30 ~ Sheriff

Nancy Pennekamp ~ September 8 ~ Orchard Manor

Nathaniel Clardy ~ September 9 ~ Orchard Manor

Misty Thill ~ September 11 ~ Orchard Manor

Team Grant County

Budget Word Find

E C N A L A B X K V F J V D D M
S C I C A R R Y O V E R F G Z S
N M N V T C D L X T E G D U B H
E T A A C G C F S A L A R I E S
P F I N N O G O R D D B U E N M
X S F C D I N E U E U D R S E U
E M U I I A F T C N V U A C F I
R A C L C F T R R G T E O M I M
L R A A R I E E L I M I N A T E
T G P P Y A E D D V B W N U S R
N O I S S E C N O C H U U G E P
U R T E S A E R C N I Q T C P T
O P A N M P U B T Y U H Y I X D
C C L R X I V D L J Z F R N O R
C C R E C O N C I L I A T I O N
A G S X C Z U T B T L M Q Y P J

CONTRIBUTION
ACCOUNTING
PROGRAMS
AUDIT
CARRYOVER
ELIMINATE
ACCOUNT
EXPENSE

REVENUE
DEFICIT
SALARIES
EXPENDITURE
BALANCE
LAPSE
BENEFITS
DECREASE
PREMIUMS

INCREASE
CONCESSION
RECONCILIATION
EFFICIENCY
BUDGET
FINANCE
CAPITAL
MANDATED